

WASHINGTON, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1904.

"Ellabu Abha," Says Mirza to Washington

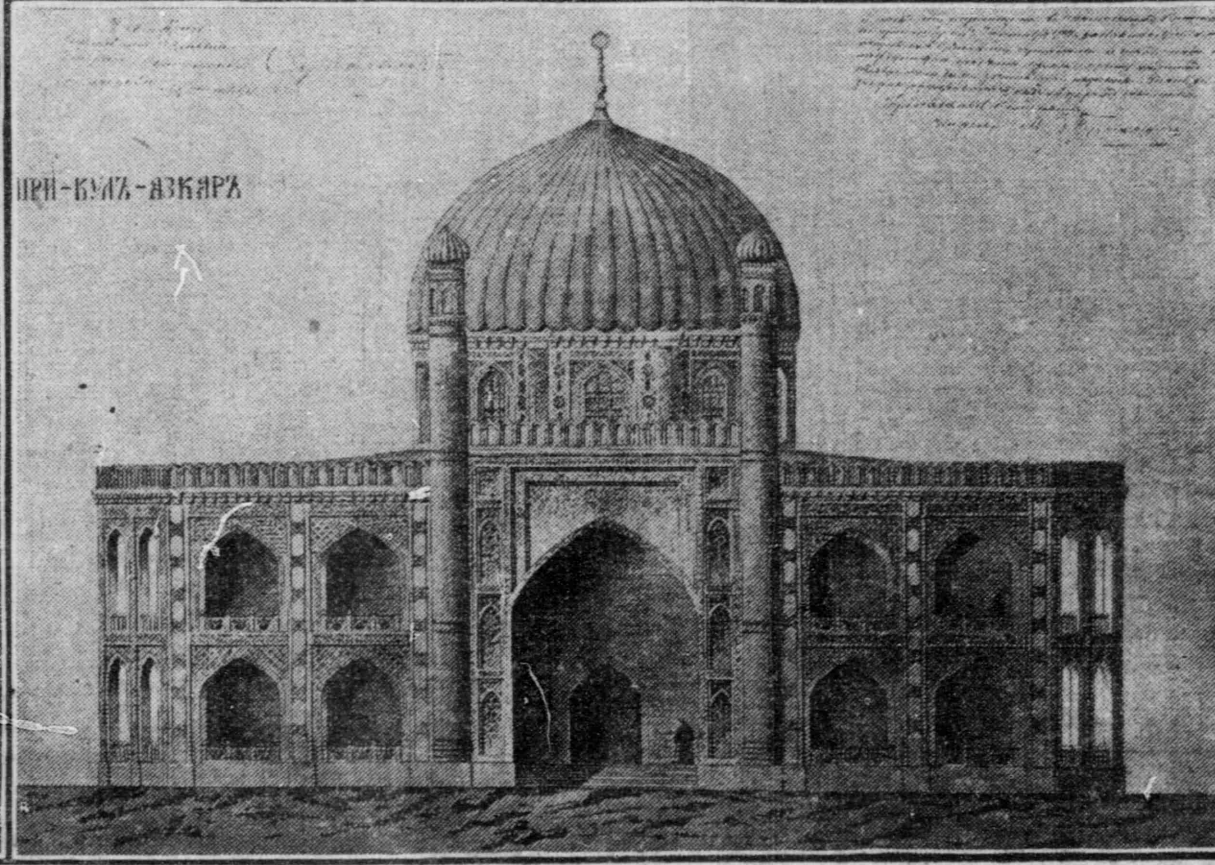
HERE IS THE GREETING OF FAZI.

Robed and Turbaned Persian Has
Converted Many Capital City
People to Babist Faith.

This City Chosen Headquarters for
Propagation of the Doctrines
in America.



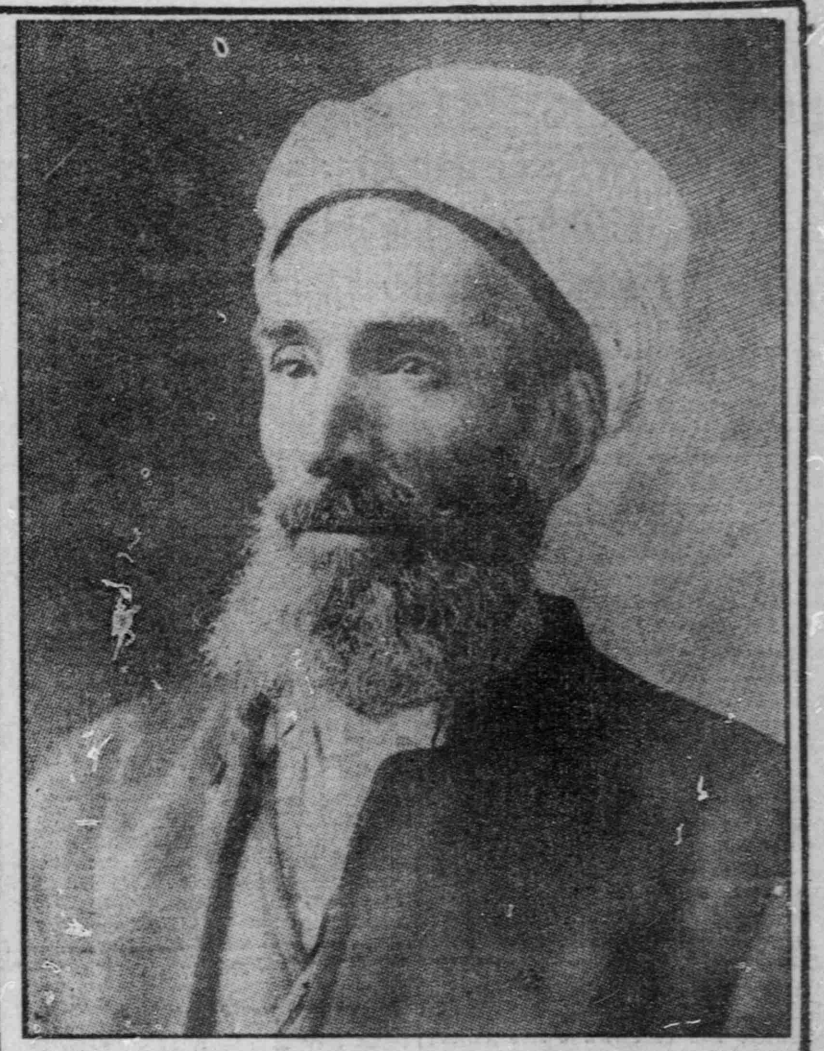
Mirza Abul Fazl, Ali Kuli Khan, and Mirza Ahmad, the Three Washington Missionaries, in Vacation Time at Greenacre, Me.



The Only Babist Church, Now Building at Askabad, Russia.

The Religion of Bab Seeks to Har-
monize Christian, Mohammedan,
Brahman, and Buddhist.

Sixty Years Ago Bab, the Messiah,
First Appeared on Earth in
Far-Off Persia.



MIRZA ABUL FAZL.

The Creed of the Babists

This is the mission of the Beha 'U'llah—Might and Majesty to his Blessed Perfection—to show the harmony between the various great religions of the world—seven in number. The lord has chosen him as an instrument for this purpose, as a prototype for love universal—the wiping away of the barriers of race, nationality, and religion.

He was sent to open the inner meanings of all the books of religion, and to show that they contain the same prophecy, with no intrinsic difference, all revealed by the same God by successive messengers adapted to the period of time in which they appeared.

Such is the tenor of all prophecy. It is our belief that the final manifestation of God has been made, in the Beha 'U'llah. If we are mistaken another and greater will appear, but it is not for us or for any to reject the best that has appeared to date.

MIRZA ABUL FAZL.

Persia, where the religion was born, fear of persecution keeps many silent, while fear of being misunderstood or ridiculed operates to the same effect in this and European countries.

The Creed of Beha.

Asked to tell briefly the distinctive features and underlying principles of his religion, Dr. Mirza, through his interpreter, Ali Kuli Khan, spoke as follows: "The doctrine of Beha attacks no religion; instead it harmonizes them all. Your Bible is largely composed of the prophecies of seers. These prophecies are true, and inspired by the Divine Will. On this faith millions affirm their hopes for life and for the future."

"Zoroaster wrote the Zend-Avesta, on the truth of which millions of Hindoos depend for salvation. The Koran of Mohammed, and the writings of Brahman, Buddha, and Confucius represent as much to other millions. The attachment of these countless hearts to these various religions prove their sources inspired, yet we find their adherents in direct controversy with each other, each holding that the other is mistaken. On the contrary, all these religious writings are true, and emanate from the same Divine source. This is the mission of the Beha 'U'llah—Might and Majesty to his Blessed Perfection—to show the harmony between the various great religions of the world—seven in number. The Lord has chosen him as an instrument for this purpose, as a prototype for love universal—the wiping away of the barriers of race, nationality and religion."

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"When the world sees this—when the Mohammedan, for instance, recognizes the truth of the Beha 'U'llah, and the Christian of the Koran, and the Jew of the Bible, will be wiped away, and so on till all peoples and religions understand and love each other, to the final funeral of strife, warfare and hatred."

"Such is the tenor of all prophecy. It is our belief that the final manifestation of God has been made, in the Beha 'U'llah. If we are mistaken, another and greater will appear, but it is not for us or for any to reject the best that has appeared to date."

Bible Class Study.

At the session of the Bible Class, conducted by Dr. Mirza, in his apartments at 1224 Fifteenth Street northwest, were in attendance some twelve women and two men. All took notes freely.

The subject of the prophecies contained in the second and fourth chapters of the "Book of Daniel," where the Babylonish king, Nebuchadnezzar, dreams the visions of the Great Figure and the Great Tree. Both these dreams have been taken by the Christian to refer to Jesus. Dr. Mirza contends that such an interpretation is inconsistent with the facts, and takes them to imply, instead, to the coming of the Beha.

He also holds that the eating of grass like an ox, recorded in Nebuchadnezzar, is but a figure of speech and a sign, as are all other passages in the Bible, inconsistent with the laws of nature,

which, says Mirza, God never has, and never will, set aside.

The teachings of the Beha cover a wide range, and, like those of the founders of the great religions, are pure in tone and spirit, when considered as guides for moral conduct. It is conceded by the most vigorous critic of the new religion that the moral character of its adherents, as a body, is above reproach. Add to this the qualities of great fortitude, under persecution, and a zeal which has brought its missionaries into the heart of America, and one must respect the creed, however he may think of the truth or falsity of the claims of the Bab and the Beha.

Origin of the Cult.

The Babist cult had its origin in the interior of Persia, just sixty years ago, yet today, in spite of the most severe persecution of modern times, or perhaps because of it, it numbers its adherents by the tens of thousands, and not only threatens to take the religious supremacy from Mohammedanism in the land of its birth, but its growth in the United States has been marvelous. What, then, is the Babist sect, its history, and tenets?

All are familiar with the Millerite movement in this country in 1844. Being their belief on prophecies of the Bible, the followers of Miller looked for the immediate coming of the Messiah on earth. Giving away all their worldly goods—no great was their faith, on an appointed day, they dressed themselves in white robes and went upon the housetops to meet the Lord in the air. They were disappointed.

According to the Babists, they were not in error. The signs and prophecies were true, they say, for the coming of the Messiah, and in that very year the Bab made his appearance, and Abbas Effendi, "The Master, as he is termed, who is the present head of the religion, was born."

Mirza Ali Mohammed, a lineal descendant of Mohammed, the prophet, was born in October, 1819. In 1844 he returned to his native Persia from a pilgrimage to Mecca, and immediately announced himself as the forerunner of the promised Messiah, whose coming he declared to be imminent. The name "Bab," which he adopted, means "The Door."

The Babists accept Jesus of Nazareth just as they do Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Brahman, Confucius, and Mohammed, as a forerunner and prophet, and not as a fulfillment of all prophecy, and they place the Bab in the same category. And all, they say, prophesied of the coming of Beha 'U'llah. Yet they take each as his own estimate, and therefore, accept Christ as the word of God and spirit of God.

They accept the prophecies of the Bible, and on them base the claim that the Bab had the same relations to the Beha as John the Baptist bore to Christ. They also find warrant for his appearance at this time, the 1260 year of the Hegira of Mohammed, in the predictions of Mohammed himself.

Flocking to the Standard of Bab.

The Bab must at least have possessed a remarkable personality and great magnetism and force of character, for it is a matter of history that a short time from his first appearance as a preacher his followers numbered fully 200,000. Mohammed Shah, the then ruler

of Persia, sent one of his most learned doctors, Seyyid Yahya, of Dorah, to interrogate this new teacher, and the former at once became a convert to the new religion.

Religious and political jealousy of the new movement resulted in the speedy exile and incarceration of the Bab in the castles of Moku and Chulhrick, while his leading proselytes were put to death with every form of torture. So great was their faith in their new religion that history offers no instance of a more glorious martyrdom than was suffered by these adherents. They ran to meet the executioner, and died with shouts of joy and protestations of their faith on their lips.

The Bab himself was executed, being shot while suspended with a faithful follower from a nail in the outer wall of his cell, on July 9, 1850. In the presence of assembled thousands. It is said that the first volley from the rifle of soldiers left the Bab unharmed, but the second rattled him with balls.

Among those who heard and accepted the preaching of the Bab was Mirza Huseyn Ali, son of a former vizier, who was born November 12, 1817, at Teheran. After a time he made the announcement that he was the Messiah of whom the Bab had been speaking, and assumed the name of "Beha 'U'llah," which means "The Glory of God."

When in 1851 an attempt was made on the life of the Shah by an insane Baluch, the Beha, with other Babists, was imprisoned for four months. On his release in 1852, it having been impossible to connect him with the crime, he left Persia and went to Baghdad. He never returned to Persia, having been exiled by the government and his property confiscated.

The remainder of his life is designated by his followers as the "forty years' exile." After eleven years in Baghdad, during which time he was followed steadily increased, he was summoned to Constantinople by the Sultan, whose curiosity was excited. After four months he was directed to reside in Adrianople. His record there was another chapter of proselyting.

When, in 1867, he proclaimed his divine mission before a great multitude, the jealousy of the Turkish religious authorities was aroused, as had been in Persia. Soon after a decree of exile to Akka, in Syria, the Turkish penal colony, was procured against the Beha 'U'llah from the Sultan.

In Akka the Beha lived in the Palace of Beha, just outside the walls, where he died May 15, 1892. He was buried in a tomb in the courtyard of the palace, which became an object of devotion to members of the new faith, hundreds of pilgrims visiting it every year.

Akka became the "New Jerusalem" of Babism, and is still their holy city and the headquarters of their religion, which is administered by Abbas Effendi, the eldest son of the Beha, who is termed the "Greatest Branch," and who was appointed by Beha as his successor.

The Beha had unbounded faith in his own claims, as is evidenced by his attitude toward the world powers. He had no hesitancy in criticizing their

From The Word of the Messiah

By the Hand of Power I made thee, by the Fingers of Strength I created thee, and in thee deposited the essence of My Light.

Therefore depend upon this and upon naught else, for verily Mine Action is perfect and My Decree shall prevail.

Doubt not this; question it naught.

Let thy satisfaction be in Me, not in those who are inferior to Me.

Seek no refuge besides Me, for verily there is naught else will ever satisfy thee.

BEHA 'U'LLAH.

acts, and directing what he considered their proper course, telling them frankly that he was the manifestation of God, who would pursue them with vengeance if they did not heed his counsel. These messages were in the form of tablets, written in the Persian language.

Among other rulers he addressed were Pope Leo, for whom he predicted the loss of temporal power; Queen Victoria, whom he admired for her attitude toward the abolition of slavery; Napoleon III, and Czar Alexander II. Alexander and Victoria were the only sovereigns who deigned a reply.

When Napoleon read his tablet, he is said to have thrown it contemptuously away, saying, "If this man be God, then am I two gods." On hearing this the Beha wrote another tablet, prophesying the loss of his kingdom, which was verified by the Franco-German war. Successful predictions like these have greatly strengthened the belief of his followers.

The Apostle in America.

Mirza Abul Fazl, head of the Babist faith in the United States, was born of distinguished parentage in Gulpaygan, a small Persian town, in 1844, the very year the Bab declared himself. His father was an earnest and erudite doctor of the Shiite sect of Mohammedanism, and young Mirza was reared in that faith.

As an instance of his learning, it is told of him that, while in Isfahan, in 1866, while but twenty-two years of age, a student took to him for criticism the newly issued Arabic dictionary entitled, "Feroz-Abadi," containing some 1,400 pages. After an examination of one night Mirza returned the book with the information that the only faults were the wrong accentuation of two words. Weeks of study on the part of other teachers and critics established the correctness of this verdict.

In October, 1873, Mirza was appointed professor in the School of Hakim-Hashem, in Teheran, one of the oldest Arabic universities of the Persian capital. It was while teaching there in 1875 that he met a merchant named Aga-Abdul-Kerim, who was a Beha, or Babist. Mirza and Aga began a discussion of religion, which lasted for months, and in which Mirza met many distinguished exponents of the new religion.

In October of that year one of these,

Haji Mohammed Ismail Zabeh, interpreted some of the Beha's writings to mean the imminent oppression, deposition, and murder of Abdul-Aziz, the then reigning Sultan.

"If what you predict comes to pass, then will I accept the Beha," said Mirza. When, therefore, in May of the following year, just these things did occur, he doubted no longer, but accepted the faith in which he was to become so distinguished a leader.

It was not the disposition of Mirza to be secretive about his new faith, and it was not long before he was arrested by the governor of Teheran, at the instance of the Mohammedan clergy, his property confiscated, and Mirza himself thrown into jail. After five months' incarceration he was released by order of the minister of war.

Every effort was then made to get the doctor to recant. On his refusal to do so, persecution was heaped on him, all of which he bore meekly. In 1882, the Shah's mind having been poisoned against Mirza, he was again arrested, thrown into an underground dungeon, where twenty-four men were bound with two chains for a period of fourteen days. This incarceration lasted twenty-two months. After seven months' freedom he was imprisoned a third time, and on his release in 1886 left Persia.

Writings of Mirza.

The story of how Mirza came to write his religious works is inseparably bound up with the story of the persecutions of his people. Modesty during the lifetime of his Master prevented his taking up the pen, which he handles with characteristic Oriental mysticism and metaphor, yet at the same time with Occidental vigor. In 1887, he met with "Wargha, the Martyr," who brought him a verbal message from the Beha, commanding that he use his talents in the dissemination of literature. Since that time he has been constantly writing.

His latest work, written in Washington, and published last year, is called "Hujjat 'U'l Beheyeh," or the Beha! Proofs. This book is to be found in the Congressional and Public Libraries, as well as in hundreds of homes. It was written in the Persian and translated by Ali Kuli Khan, the interpreter who serves Mirza in his lectures and classes. The book includes five introductions to the great work Mirza now has in hand, namely, the compilation and explanation of the Beha's writings.

"ALLAHU ABHA—God is the most glorious."

This salutation of the disciples of Bab is made by a man, clad in Oriental costume, small of stature, slender of build, and probably sixty years of age. A flowing iron-gray beard covers the face, except the small but piercing black eyes. These, in repose, have the expression of Oriental mysticism, of the metaphysician, of the philosophical student, of the religious devotee, of the man who thinks much and deeply on the profound issues of life, and love, and death. The countenance, in greeting friend or stranger, beams with goodwill.

An Unusual Figure.

Unusual, even in the Capital of the United States, where many strange figures are seen, is this one, clad in the national costume of Persia. Long flowing robes are beneath a coat which reaches to the ankles. The feet are encased in soft low slippers. The many folded turban of the eastern doctor of science and philosophy crowns the head. Mirza Abul Fazl is the head of the Beha, or Babist, sect in the United States. The words he speaks form the usual greeting of those who follow the faith of Bab. They are addressed to all who call at his apartments at 1224 Fifteenth Street northwest, whether to join in the devotion of the cult or to satisfy a curiosity concerning the spread of the faith in this country. There is the headquarters of the Beha in the United States.

Mirza Abul Fazl's Home.

The seeker after knowledge was ushered into a large upper room, a combination of study, parlor, and office, comfortably but plainly furnished. On the walls are text books in Persian and photographs of men and women in Oriental and military costumes.

On a table lie countless papers inscribed in all the languages of the globe. The bookcase is filled with works of a

profound character in Persian, Arabic, French, and English. Mirza will usually be found seated on a low chair, with Ali Kuli Khan and Mirza-Ahmad, his translator and interpreter, on either hand. The doctor speaks English but indifferently. All three rise and make the visitor welcome with typical eastern hospitality. Refreshments are pressed upon her, which include a tea like not to be purchased in this country.

When the subject of the Beha religion is broached all is enthusiasm. Waving his hands to impress his points, the doctor discourses in Persian, while Ali Kuli Khan interprets.

Here for Missionary Work.

Mirza Abul Fazl's presence in Washington is for missionary work incident to the remarkable growth of the faith he represents.

The religion itself is but sixty years extant, and its tenets were first known in the United States eleven years ago, when one of its adherents, a Syrian, came here in charge of an exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair. Converts made in the western city was the first proselyting to the new religious philosophy.

The movement spread with such rapidity that the head of the church, if it may be so termed, delegated Mirza Abul Fazl to come here and promulgate the teachings of the Beha in their purity. All Mirza, and Ahmad to interpret, therefore, are the direct disciples of the master, Abbas Effendi.

In Chicago and New York, the adherents of his faith number less than a dozen. Now he has come to attend the bi-weekly sessions in the Corcoran Building and to the lectures which fall from the lips of the master, Abbas Effendi.

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